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# Bard

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A flower is another kind of mirror  
I look in to see itself

the one nobody knows  
and everybody sees.

In every word  
they say people are telling I  
don't know how I got here  
trust nothing  
I tell you I am lying  
so you'll get the point  
there is none and I don't know what to do.

Whereas a flower does not consent to itself.  
A flower is always other.

1 May 1994

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In memory of the mirror  
when I could still see my confusion  
smiling at me, hand  
maybe raised to my face  
to stroke my cheek or say good-bye.

1 May 1994

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1  
I want  
to hide

2  
the word  
inside

3  
I want to hide the word inside itself.

1 May 1994

## THE NATIVE

City being  
being belle

ma ville and how  
to get over that

this me  
historical

flesh-wound of a town  
musing me anew.

How slow  
they move.

In quiet rain  
we can't hear

above the grey  
drone of stone

buildings,  
color of *to stand*.

Not to fall.  
Sunday brunch

Fifth Avenue the old  
yellow and green

lunacy of buses  
old double-deckers once

irishing down  
crowded avenue now

an empty ordinary  
street uncrowded.

Low traffic  
and simple eye

touching it  
all again.

1 May 1994 NYC

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On the twelfth day of Flowermonth and  
the day 8-Tooth a guide  
is supposed to appear and a guide  
arrives out of the air

a mouth full of teeth  
speaks: teeth  
cut the breath  
by shaping  
where the tongue  
sits when the wind  
rides

dust over the piazza  
the stir of sunset  
wind falls,

corn, crows. Nada.  
A whole day in one second,  
like total anesthesia  
waking, after, and hearing it's done, all done,  
the thing, the cut, the ceremony  
for which your whole body suddenly seems meant.

This is the day marked Today on the bitter calendar—  
sweet green lawns and teeth--of-line  
and red leafed fruit trees meant to blossom,

all we mean, all we mean, a marriage of us to what passes.

2 May 1994

## VOCATION

I will sit beneath this tree  
and issue valid destinies  
to those who pass me and  
to those lower ones who move  
down on the grand floor of the atrium.  
Me and my fig tree  
making sense of you.  
All of you. I look and tell  
the first thing that comes to mind.  
And that is you. Forever.  
Your story. Told.

2 May 1994  
Galleria, Poughkeepsie



DRUNKEN MAN FALLEN MAN IN THE  
STREET

—Why did you do this to yourself?

—So that the rest of you  
could feel good about yourselves

and pity me. Over aeons  
you may yet develop  
a little human decency.  
This is a small price for me to pay.

2 May 1994  
Galleria, Poughkeepsie

## THE CASTING

*for Charlotte*

Cast from the door an image of the room:  
the island over that fallow sea  
with sweet blond animals on it  
mooing at dawn to wake you

for you are also milk and cloud  
tatters round the edge of a bright mind  
you never heard the wind

you never felt the wave, the Orinoco  
still yellow a hundred miles at sea  
and your shoulder slips from under the sheet  
waking me with the sweetness of your smell.

We wake into the senses from where?  
Clear-minded and baffling and apart,  
the other room we keep arriving from.

3 May 1994

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Dust and clouds and wax and wood  
the table is. A knot  
in pine where density  
is destiny, a car goes by.

Enough clues. Solve. I'm waiting  
on the other side of the lawn.  
I am your native language now,  
speak me. I chose you

from all others. Do you know it  
at last? Gold and road.  
Leaf, and foam. The information  
hurries over the falls. All I am

is waiting for you to speak.

4 May 1994

---

I sit down to it this job this opening  
(a woman lying in the surf)  
they are calling me  
to be drenched by the occasion

to give birth to your instructor in a field  
nine nights after you fell from heaven  
rested calmly in the water till the lifeboat came  
stood on line and now you have bread in your hand

the miracles are too frequent to notice, it is the law  
that's hard to find, we live among exceptions  
who will teach us what to pick up what to put down?  
(you came with a candle it burned the water)

mother is the largest conversation (you spoke  
the subway shuddered its way north under fountains and museums)  
the conservation of inequality is every political agenda  
(give me all your love) nothing is personal everything is close.

5 May 1994

## YARLUNG ZANGPO

Today in Tibet they say

Yarlung Zangpo canyon is 198 miles long 5 kilometers deep aswarm  
with monkeys and tigers, cut by the Brahmaputra in the Pliocene

is bigger than the Grand Canyon, i.e., about the same length but three  
times deeper.

How wide's not said.

There must be a unit ~200 miles for Great Terrestrial Canyons.

Semitropical Tibetan gorge. Imagine the feel of it, the ripe of it, with  
the river flushing through.

I wonder if the Chinese news agency was trying to say Tsangpo, the  
Tibetan for R. Brahmaputra. [Yes— later postings make this clear.  
It's the river name. The canyon itself is NAMCHE BARWA.]

I wonder if it's true. What is waiting down there for me?

In ferns wet with warm eternal spray, monkeys howl.

[News of 5 May 1994]

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Grey sky relieving anxiety  
*the light is everywhere the same—*  
*live with it.* For one day  
the glare does not rehearse my death.

From the quickening glint work of the stream  
I glimpse through new leaves, weeds,  
I guess the usual conduct: kings,  
concubines, clergymen, the bleak

sincerity of the rich. Size  
means something still. We are all  
the audience, and gape at one another  
since we are the actors too.

The Zlata business. The babies  
in Rwanda entertain us  
(the technical term) all night  
in CNN. Men flee their wives

down the tunnel of inept addictions  
when *I alone was set the task*  
*to make you free* is what she says.  
If she could speak. If he could listen.

The self-consuming celebrity, the light.  
That's why I feel peace this morning, Peter,  
the smug promises of democracy.  
No shadows on a rainy day

but no rain yet. One more  
contract signed. Idleness  
may save us yet, the quiet mind  
staring at itself, relaxed, unwanting.

6 May 1994

## Abendrot

The arrogance of light that finds us  
equalizes all. The same sigh.  
No more the exquisite carpentry  
of nights abed. My hammer  
dreams of you alone. Flower  
here and flower there. The years  
in their quiet sarabande  
go slow around me, they wrap  
their arms around me, fly me  
into the evening sky, that map  
of pure memory. Over west  
one last scarletting along the world,  
bright bright and then the not.

6 May 1994  
Listening to Haydn's 99<sup>th</sup>

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A gap stares me. Yawning  
through Haydn. This is too  
Analytical Triumphal, it  
leaves no room for my doubt.

And I have doubt. Even the dreary  
classic say-everything-three-  
times does not communicate  
insecurity, as it does when I do it.

But the healing gap, hole in clothes,  
belt loop, ferry slip, zeppelin  
hangar, radio tower stuck in the sky,  
keyhole, tongue-in-cheek, flower calyx

drowned in pollen captivating bees,  
blue ogival Mary Mother of  
God window of true blue in the yellow  
flame on the candle, a light

in the darkness, hole in the ground.  
Thinking of these I found a mood  
or mien of silence, love,  
to tend us through these ceremonies,

your head on my shoulder, tender  
weariness of this music, small  
leafbuds on our private shrubbery  
back home, singsong of Great Doubt

reminding us: *true is only something we can do.*

7 May 1994



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Twenty pages of prose fiction snapped like a twig  
from a dead branch on a live tree. Tell me

who the words are for? Tell me the frightened child  
eased by such lies. It is in me like a ship

breasting endless waves in endless wind  
and the god sun sparkling over all.

7 May 1994

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*[Note 1 to Brian Kim Stefans]*

Nancarrow did you  
know our friend L.B.  
was the one who  
got him all that money  
the Grant

the “trick with  
all of it” the shame  
we have to talk of such  
thingly occasions when  
spirit-people

wearing white Confucian  
caps are riding  
sober in the Mourning  
Cart grieving  
specifically our Poverty

that lady  
you saw me cross  
the road with also  
her brown ratskin cloak  
her broad feet

Plato was full of it.  
On the fifth day  
of the fifth month one  
climbs high situations  
and eats rice tamales

steamed in banana  
leaves, the confusions

of history  
are upon us,  
we taste them, every

Friday we buy more sum.

7 May 1994 / le 17 Floréal

## NOTE 2 to BRIAN KIM STEFANS

It isn't  
(continuing  
with Nancarrow)  
music  
you can't imagine

for example  
when I  
predictably in California  
finally heard him  
it was precisely  
as I imagined he would be

only more so.  
Berkeley Irby  
old Columbia  
vinyl it would be  
from an earlier  
revival—  
think of it,  
an archaic revival

clangor and horns  
all insistent  
from the one  
spectacular piano  
—imagine whales  
sounding in butter  
imagine the sun  
trapped in a kitchen drawer

the exaltation  
is nearby and domestic  
and very intricate  
it is built  
four inches past  
the edges of hearing

no one can understand  
music  
in the first place.

Isn't that  
what we've been saying  
all along  
in what must now  
with accuracy  
be called our  
practice?

(I don't know  
I think I have sunstroke  
today, pouring  
pine trees  
on the fire

and Charlotte saw  
two herons above us  
on our way to the fire

((and even now  
says a certain immature  
Broad-winged Hawk  
we saw two days ago  
for hours patient

has just come back to our tree.

9 May 1994

